

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03536 221419Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4653
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3536

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT IS LE
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: CEASE-FIRE AND APPLICATION CAIRO ACCORD

1. SUMMARY. PLO HAS AGREED IMPLEMENT CAIRO ACCORD IN ACCORDANCE LEBANESE INTERPRETATION AND HAS ANNOUNCED UNILATERAL CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH. PRESIDENT SARKIS AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT PLO SINCERITY, BUT NEVERTHELESS ANXIOUS GIVE CEASE-FIRE A CHANCE TO WORK. THEY REQUEST WE URGE ISRAELIS APPLY RESTRAINT IN SOUTH AND ACCEPT UNCONDITIONAL CEASE-FIRE PENDING WORKING OUT OF DETAILS OF PROPOSED PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL. END SUMMARY.

2. CALLED ON PRESIDENT SARKIS AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS AT THEIR REQUEST AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE MORNING JULY 22. FOUND BOTH GENTLEMEN SOMEWHAT BEMUSED BY FACT PALESTINIANS IN TRIPARTITE MEETING YESTERDAY AT SHTAURA HAD AGREED TO IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD IN ACCORDANCE WITH
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LEBANESE INTERPRETATION THEREOF. (NUMEROUS DETAILS IN THIS MORNING'S PRESS WHICH BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY APPEAR TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT.) GOL NOTES THAT THIS REPRESENTS TURN ABOUT IN PALESTINIAN POLICY AND THEY ARE AT LOSS TO EXPLAIN IT. SARKIS SAID PALESTINIANS HAVE FURTHERMORE ANNOUNCED UNILATERAL CEASE-FIRE FOR SOUTH AND UNDERTAKEN TO LIFT ROADBLOCKS

AND OPEN ROADS TO HERETOFORE ISOLATED VILLAGES. THEY SAY THEY ARE PREPARED PULL BACK FROM FRONTIER PROVIDING THEY HAVE ASSURANCES CHRISTIAN FORCES OR ISRAELIS WILL NOT MOVE IN WHEN THEY MOVE OUT.

3. MEETING AT SHTAURA WAS STAGE ONE OF IMPLEMENTATION AND CONSISTED OF PURELY MILITARY ACCORD ON AN UNCONDITIONAL CEASE-FIRE. LEBANESE UNDERTOOK TO TRY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH CHRISTIAN FORCES TO URGE RESTRAINT. STAGE TWO IS TO BE AGREEMENT ON DETAILS OF SCHEDULE AND SCOPE OF WITHDRAWAL AND ON DISPATCH OF LEBANESE TROOPS TO OCCUPY POINTS FROM WHICH PALESTINIANS WITHDRAW.

4. AS NOTED ABOVE, SARKIS AND BOUTROS SKEPTICAL AS TO SINCERITY PALESTINIANS AND AT LOSS TO EXPLAIN ABOUT-FACE WITH REGARD TO CAIRO ACCORD. THEY ASKED IF WE HAD ANY EXPLANATION. I SAID I HAD NO INFORMATION ON SUBJECT BUT SPECULATED THAT THERE MIGHT BE NUMBER OF FACTORS INVOLVED, INCLUDING PALESTINIAN APPREHENSIONS ABOUT ISRAELIS, PLO DESIRE TO PROJECT MORE MODERATE IMAGE AND PALESTINIAN REALIZATION THAT THEY HAD MADE THEMSELVES UNPOPULAR WITH EVERYBODY IN LEBANON. PRESIDENT ASKED IF WE THOUGHT SAUDIS MIGHT HAVE APPLIED PRESSURE ON PLO. I SAID THAT WAS POSSIBILITY, BUT HAD NO INFORMATION.

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5. PRESIDENT SAID IN ANY EVENT THIS WAS IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT AND IT VERY MUCH IN INTEREST OF LEBANON THAT CEASE-FIRE BE ESTABLISHED AND WORK. HE REQUESTED THAT WE URGE ISRAELIS TO COOPERATE IN AN UNCONDITIONAL CEASE-FIRE, MEANING, FOR INSTANCE, THAT THEY NOT RESPOND IN KIND TO REPORTED PLO ATTACK ON ALMA ASH-SHAAB. I SAID I WOULD TRANSMIT MESSAGE IMMEDIATELY BUT KNEW THAT FIRST QUESTION ISRAELIS WOULD ASK WAS WHAT WERE DETAILS. THEY HAD EARLIER INDICATED THEY WOULD WELCOME CEASE-FIRE BUT WOULD WANT TO KNOW DETAILS BEFORE THEY URGED CHRISTIANS TO HOLD BACK. THIS I HAD COMMUNICATED TO FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS. PRESIDENT SAID THEIR POSITION UNDERSTANDABLE, BUT DETAILS NOT YET WORKED OUT. IN MEANTIME, PLO HAD ANNOUNCED UNILATERAL CEASE-FIRE AND LEBANESE WANTED TO GIVE IT A CHANCE TO WORK. THEY ASKED THAT ISRAELIS RESTRAIN SELVES AND CHRISTIANS FOR TIME BEING. THEY WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH US AS SOON AS DETAILS WITHDRAWAL AGREED ON AND WE COULD THEN COMMUNICATE THESE TO ISRAELIS.

6. PRESIDENT STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF QUICK REPLY SINCE

NEXT MEETING OF TRIPARTITE COMMISSION WAS TO BE ON JULY 25. IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL IF THEY COULD HAVE ISRAELI RESPONSE BY THAT TIME. I UNDERTOOK TO DO MY BEST.

7. COMMENT: HAVING JUST DRAFTED (BUT NOT SENT) LONG MESSAGE ON PALESTINIAN UNZILLINGNESS IMPLEMENT CAIRO ACCORD, I AM AS BEMUSED AS SARKIS AND BOUTROS. NEVERTHELESS, I THINK IT IN GENERAL INTEREST TO TAKE THEM AT THEIR WORD AND SEE IF CEASE-FIRE CAN BE MADE TO WORK AND HOPE TEL AVIV CAN BE INSTRUCTED TO PASS TOL REQUEST TO ISRAELIS ASAP. IF RESPONSE SENT ON WEEKEND, PLEASE MAKE IT NIACT IMMEDIATE.

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Message Attributes

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